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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

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3/6. Managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable development

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

Recalling also the revised World Soil Charter, adopted by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its thirty-ninth session, held in Rome in June 2015, and reaffirming in that regard that Governments should establish and implement regulations to limit the accumulation of contaminants beyond established levels to safeguard human health and well-being and facilitate the remediation of contaminated soils that exceed those levels where they pose a threat to humans, plants and animals,

Recalling further United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/24 on combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands,

Welcoming the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on soil issues, including the establishment of the Global Soil Partnership for Food Security and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in December 2012 and the publication in December 2015 of the *Status of the World's Soil Resources* report by the Global Soil Partnership Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, as well as the development of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management* endorsed by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its one hundred and fifty-fifth session, held in Rome in December 2016,

Welcoming also the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, on land and the launch of the *Global Land Outlook* at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in September 2017,

Acknowledging that land is the main resource base around which ecosystem services are anchored, that soil is one of the largest reservoirs of biodiversity and that the negative impacts of the contamination of soil undermine productivity and sustainability of ecosystems, biodiversity, agriculture and food security, and clean ground and surface water, potentially hampering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 13 and 15,[1]

Acknowledging also that soils, which contain the second largest active carbon stock, the first being the oceans, are an essential element for climate change mitigation and resilience, and that land

[1] A/RES/70/1.

pollution leads to a reduction in soil biological activity and is therefore one factor contributing to the reduction of its capacity to act as a carbon sink,

Recognizing that preventing, reducing and managing soil pollution is vital to protecting human and environmental health and improving human well-being,

Concerned about the threat of soil pollution emanating from oil spillages, unsustainable mining practices, unregulated or uncontrolled disposals and emissions of chemicals, heavy metals and wastes, improper use of fertilizers and pesticides in agricultural production, and contamination from landfills,

Concerned also about the knowledge gap and lack of data and information on soil pollution and contamination and its impact on health and the environment globally, as well as the lack of a coordinated and robust policy approach to curtailing soil pollution at the national level and, where relevant, the regional and international levels,

Emphasizing that capacity-building, the development and transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms and resource mobilization from all sources are important elements in the achievement of sustainable development,

1. *Requests* member States and invites relevant United Nations organizations to address soil pollution within the global environmental, food security and agriculture, development and health agendas in an integrated manner, especially through preventive approaches and risk management using available science;

2. *Encourages* member States to undertake the necessary measures at the national level and, as appropriate, the regional level to, among other things, formulate new and strengthen existing strategic interventions, policies and legislation aimed at setting norms and standards to prevent, reduce and manage soil pollution;

3. *Urges* the United Nations Environment Programme to provide, upon request and in collaboration with other United Nations entities and stakeholders, support to Governments' efforts to strengthen and, as appropriate, coordinate national and regional policies and legislation to curb soil pollution;

4. *Invites* the international community, regional bodies, civil society and the private sector to support the development of information systems on polluted sites and programmes, that invest in sustainable land management and research aimed at preventing, reducing and managing soil pollution;

5. *Reiterates* that the availability and accessibility of adequate, predictable and sustainable resources from all sources, technology development, dissemination, diffusion and transfer on mutually agreed terms and capacity-building are important to the effective prevention, reduction and management of soil pollution;

6. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with other United Nations entities and relevant global and regional initiatives with expertise related to soil and soil pollution, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Global Soil Partnership, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the World Health Organization, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the International Committee on Contaminated Land, to cooperate as appropriate in efforts geared at preventing, reducing and managing soil pollution;

7. *Requests* the Executive Director, within available resources, by the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to invite, within their respective mandates, relevant United Nations organizations, including the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Global Soil Partnership and its Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification:

(a) To prepare a report based on available scientific information and data on:

(i) The extent and future trends of soil pollution, considering both point source contamination and diffuse pollution;

(ii) The risks and impacts of soil pollution on health, the environment and food security, including land degradation and the burden of disease resulting from exposure to contaminated soil;

(b) To elaborate technical guidelines for the prevention and minimization of soil contamination as a contribution to support the implementation of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management*, including nature-based solutions;

8. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme, in consultation with member States, to invite, within their respective mandates and available resources, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other relevant United Nations entities, in collaboration with partners, including academia, research and scientific institutions, to work with the United Nations Environment Programme:

(a) To promote research and development that contributes to controlling and managing soil pollution;

(b) To strengthen the science-policy interface to inform policymaking on soil pollution, as appropriate, at the national, regional and international levels;

(c) To raise awareness and improve the dissemination of knowledge on soil pollution;

(d) To promote a coordinated approach for combating soil pollution, including the promotion of coherent and coordinated data collection and management, and information-sharing on soil pollution;

9. *Requests* the Executive Director to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session on progress in the implementation of the present resolution.